



SEIU UH W - WEST & JOINT EMPLOYER

EDUCATION FUND

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Success Through Educational Preparation (STEP)**

To help students build a strong academic foundation and achieve higher grades, the Education Fund offers the STEP program, which takes students through the series of core science classes that are the prerequisites for nursing and allied health programs, in a logical order beginning with English and math and continuing through Chemistry, Anatomy, Physiology and Microbiology.

### **How do I participate if the STEP program has already started? Does that mean that I will never be able to catch up?**

The first thing you should do is talk with a counselor or implementation specialist. They'll want to see your college transcripts, if you have taken classes already. You may need to take an English and Math assessment at the college where you hope to join the STEP program. Not everyone needs to start at the beginning of the series. Even if you've never taken college classes, you may assess high enough to start with the second class. *You can start in the middle of the STEP series if you meet both the college's and the Education Fund's prerequisites for that class.* But if you do need to start at the beginning of the STEP series you should know that in most areas we start a new group each fall. In the meantime, talk with your counselor about your assessment, transcripts and career goals. There are almost always classes that you can start with on your own – and tuition at the community colleges is only \$20 a unit.

### **Why doesn't the STEP program include *all* the classes I need, such as Biology and Medical Terminology, to get into my program or get my Associates Degree?**

We realize that there are many other classes you need in order to reach your career goal (psychology, social sciences and humanities, etc.). We can't offer all of them because of financial limitations, but you can pay for them with your employer's tuition reimbursement, and our counselors can help you map out an educational plan that includes these classes.

### **What if I can't get off work to attend class?**

Most of our classes are offered in the evenings and on the weekend. If you work evening shifts, talk with your manager about your education and career goals and see if you can work out time off. You may be able to use your accumulated Education Leave. Talk with your union steward, with us and with your co-workers on the evening shift. If you can find even a few who are interested in taking the same class, we may be able to work something out with the college.

### **What if I don't need the classes you are offering?**



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Look at the entire STEP series. Plan out when the classes you need are going to be offered in the future. Look at other schools in your area where the

Education Fund is offering the STEP series, and see if one of them will give you the classes you need sooner. Look at the web site or catalog of the school where you hope to do your nurse or allied health training. They all require classes in addition to those in the STEP series (which focuses on English, math and the sciences). Make a plan to get to work on those while you're waiting for the STEP classes you need. Best of all, do this by sitting down with an Education Fund counselor (and bring your transcripts!) If none of the STEP classes meet your needs, let us know what kind of classes would help you. You can also fill out our Program Interest survey at: <http://www.seiu-uhweduc.org/lrsurvey.html>

### **Why aren't you offering classes in my area?**

We do our best to offer classes in every area where there are eligible employees. First, call our office and make sure we don't have anything in your area. Tell us what kinds of classes you are interested in and the names of the community colleges closest to you. If we don't have anything within a 30-minute drive of where you work, we'll do our best to set something up with a college that is closer to you. You can also fill out our Program Interest survey at: <http://www.seiu-uhweduc.org/lrsurvey.html>

### **If I take classes on my own, will the Education Fund pay for it?**

The Education Fund tries not to duplicate services already provided by your employer or the union. If you want to take classes on your own, you should access your employer's tuition reimbursement program.

### **I am having a hard time getting time off of work to go to school. What can the Education Fund do to help me?**

We encourage you to talk with your supervisor or department head. The STEP program is just a beginning and you'll probably be taking classes for some time to come. Do your best to get your management to support your goals. You should also talk with your union representative. If all else fails, you might explore reducing your work hours or working a different shift – even if it means taking a less desirable job or in a less convenient location. If you're starting down the STEP road, you're heading for training in nursing or allied health. You're going to be going to school for a while, so it pays to find a job that will allow you to go to school. The Education Fund is a separate organization from your employer and from your union. We don't have any say over job assignments or release from work. But we always want to know if someone is being blocked from attending our classes. We may not be able to get you into a class, but knowing about your situation (and of others like you) may influence when we schedule future classes, as well as the message that we take to the employer and the union.



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